

An interview with Howard Meredith Ehrmann ①

HOWARD MEREDITH EH RMANN

An Interview Conducted by

Jane C. Hazledine

September 19, 1980

SpL.

977

.245

E

G.C.

c1981 by the Vigo County Public Library
Terre Haute, Indiana

VIGO COUNTY
PUBLIC LIBRARY

No. 292686

SpL. 977.245:E

"WORKS OF REFERENCE"

September 19, 1980

DATE

NARRATOR DATA SHEET

Name of narrator: Professor Howard Meredith Ehrmann, Ph.D.

The Weedner, Apt. 1 - 1009
Address: 3636 16th St., NW, Washington, DC 20010 Phone: (202) 232-4482

Birthdate: February 16, 1898 Birthplace: Terre Haute, IN

Length of residence in Terre Haute: until 1927--returned repeatedly

Education: Crawford School (then on S. 3rd St.) 1 year in California

Wiley High School 1912-16. DePauw Univ. 1916-17. Yale 1917-21.
Then Graduate school Yale, Ph.D. 1927.

Occupational history: Instructor History at Yale during graduate school.
To Univ. of Michigan 1927 as Prof. of History; chairman of history
department 1953-59. Retired age 70--1968--after 41 years. Spent
37 mos. U.S. Navy 1942-45. Now working in the office of the Secretary
of Defense, office of the Historian as a consultant since 1975. Also
taught summer school earlier at U. of Virginia, Stanford University,
U. of Southern California, Bologna, Italy School of International Studies
Since 1957--co-editor of Univ. of Michigan History of the Modern World;
now editor. 18 vols. have been published. It is an ongoing work.

Special interests, activities, etc. As a child--baseball, Boy Scouts,
photography. Was an amateur magician.

Major subject(s) of interview: _____

No. of tapes: 2 Length of interview: 2-1/2 hours actual
taping

Terms of legal agreement: _____

Interviewing sessions:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Interviewer</u>
09/19/80	8:30-12:00 noon	Sheraton Inn Terre Haute	Jane C. Hazledine

5292686

HOWARD M. EHRMANN

Tape 1

September 19, 1980

Sheraton Inn, Terre Haute, IN

INTERVIEWER: Jane C. Hazledine

TRANSCRIBER: Kathleen M. Skelly

For: Vigo County Oral History Program

©VCP. 1981

JH: This is Jane Hazledine. My guest is Professor Howard Meredith Ehrmann, Ph. D., professor emeritus of history at the University of Michigan, who is now working in the office of the Secretary of Defense, Washington, D. C. in the office of the historian as a consultant. Dr. Ehrmann is part of an old distinguished Terre Haute family.

Dr. Ehrmann, tell us, where were you born?
Here in Terre Haute?

EHRMANN: I was born in Terre Haute February 16, 1898.

JH: In Terre Haute. This was a memorable day because of a national event however.

EHRMANN: I was born the night the battleship [U.S.S.] Maine blew up.

JH: All right. You lived here then during your childhood. Where were you educated?

EHRMANN: I went to Crawford School for my elementary education all the years of that program except for one year when the family lived in Orange, California, where my father subdivided some land and sold lots. My sister and I went to grade school in Orange, California.

JH: Was your father in real estate in Terre Haute?

EHRMANN: Yes, he was in real estate in Terre Haute and especially in Miami, Florida. He had several tracts of real estate in Terre Haute. Vandalia Park subdivision . . .

JH: And where is that?

EHRMANN: Vandalia Park subdivision is in the north part of the city.

JH: And now was this his main business?

EHRMANN: No. In the early years of my life his main business was wholesale and retail meat packing -- The Ehrmann & Company -- with his office and with his

EHRMANN: store at 4th and Ohio Street. He was also in banking. He founded the bank at West Terre Haute and was its president. He was also later in life to be president of the Bank of Coral Gables of Florida and to have a number of (I think it was five) subdivisions in Miami during the boom in the twenties.

JH: What was your father's name?

EHRMANN: Charles Henry Ehrmann.

JH: And he had how many brothers and sisters?

EHRMANN: There was a sister Matilda and brothers Emil, and Albert and Max Ehrmann.

JH: And Max Ehrmann is Terre Haute's poet, right?

EHRMANN: Yes.

JH: Our interest in you, of course, also is associated with our interest in Max and we would like, a little later on, to hear something about your association with Max Ehrmann in those early years.

Well, going back to your childhood again, after you left grade school . . . and where was the Crawford school then?

EHRMANN: 3rd and Farrington Street.

JH: It's not there any more, is it?

EHRMANN: It's not there, no, and the building, I understand, has been demolished. Then I went to Wiley High School. I was at Wiley High School from 1912 to 1916. My junior year I was president of my class. After graduation from Wiley, I attended DePauw University at Greencastle, Indiana, for a year and then transferred to Yale and fell back a year and entered as a freshman in the class of 1921. In all, I was ten years at Yale -- four years as an undergraduate and six years as a graduate student taking the master's degree . . . Master of Arts degree and the Ph.D. in history and serving also for three years as an instructor in European history at Yale.

JH: When did you decide to go into history?

EHRMANN: I believe it was in the third grade in Crawford School that I took two decisions. One was that I was

EHRMANN: going to be a historian and the other was that I was going to go to Yale.

JH: What influenced these decisions at that time?

EHRMANN: As far back as I started reading, I read history books, and at Christmas and on my birthday my mother and father gave me books of history to read. So that goes back to the beginning of my reading. As far as Yale goes, that was a result of my early reading and reading of stories of college life . . .

JH: Were there members . . .

EHRMANN: . . . and I wanted to go to Yale. Yes.

JH: Excuse me. Were there members of your family who had gone to Yale? Why Yale?

EHRMANN: Later, a cousin, Frederick Reckert, went to Yale and was a member of the class of 1911. He was at Yale 1907 to 1911, but my decision had been taken before he went to Yale.

JH: All right. When you left Yale then, where did you go?

EHRMANN: From Yale, I went in 1927 to Ann Arbor to the University of Michigan as an instructor in history the first year, and then subsequently, I was an assistant professor, an associate professor, and then finally a full professor. During that period of 41 years on the faculty at Ann Arbor, I was chairman of the department in the 1950's -- 1953 to 1959. I was also for 37 months in the United States Naval Reserve as a Lieutenant (senior grade) and Lieutenant Commander.

JH: And where did you serve those months?

EHRMANN: When I was called to active duty, because I was a professor, the Navy sent me to New York City to a school to take a refresher course in naval subjects so that I might be a teacher in a midshipmen's school. After being very briefly in the midshipmen's school -- on the faculty of the midshipmen's school in New York-- I was transferred to Notre Dame, Indiana, and the University of Notre Dame where a midshipmen's school had been established and went there for a year. I was at Notre Dame for a year first as an instructor in seamanship in the United States Naval Midshipmen's school

EHRMANN: and then as an assistant professor in the Notre Dame Naval ROTC. I was then ordered to Washington to the Office of Naval Intelligence. This was in December of 1943. In ONI, I was attached to a research and writing unit that produced operational studies of naval engagements as they were taking place. We produced the series [entitled] Combat Narratives. When I received my half stripe and became a Lieutenant Commander, I then was made head of the section of combat narratives and remained in that position until I was released to inactive duty in the Navy in October of 1945. I then returned to the University of Michigan.

JH: Now, at the University of Michigan then, you continued on as a professor of history there?

EHRMANN: I continued on as a professor of history and, as I've said, going up the ladder to associate professor, full professor, and including chairmanship of the department of history. As a professor, [I] carried on research in recent European history and recent international relations and the history of Italy.

JH: Then you retired at what age?

EHRMANN: I retired in 1968 and became a professor emeritus. Retirement at that time was mandatory of one who attained the age of 70.

JH: Well, you certainly had served well.

EHRMANN: I had a very varied career of teaching, research, directing the work of graduate students, and a considerable amount of administrative work and committee work. I was on the University committee that planned the undergraduate library at the University of Michigan. I was on the Library Committee at the University of Michigan. I was on the committee that brought Dr. Frederick Wagman (w-a-g-m-a-n) to the University as director of the libraries of the University. So I had a good deal of administrative work, committee work. My research after the war was in the captured German foreign ministry records which were located in England at Wodden Hall near Bletchley (b-l-e-t-c-h-l-e-y), in the captured German naval records which were at the Admiralty in London, and still later here in Washington at the National Archives in some military records of World War II and before which the Germans had seized and made into a collection at Munich. We, in turn, acquired that collection when we overran Munich. I

EHLMANN: was co-director of two research projects in that collection -- working as a consultant and director of the program for the National Archives (as co-director).

JH: Well, all of this made a tremendous foundation for your present work with the Navy.

EHLMANN: Yes, this is all part of the background that I took with me when I started working for the government.

JH: I'd like to come back to Terre Haute since our concern here is the years when you were a young man -- your observations of the city and what it was at that time. What was Terre Haute like? What was its reputation?

EHLMANN: I always regarded it . . . when I was old enough to become aware of my surroundings, [I] regarded it as a hard and tough city.

JH: What made this?

EHLMANN: It was a river town with a background -- early history and background -- of toughness. It was in an agricultural area, coal mining area. It was a manufacturing center. It was a rail center with important rail shops. It had steel and glass industries. It was an important horseracing center. It had many saloons. My recollection is of being told that there were some 300 saloons in Terre Haute. I cannot say whether this is a correct figure or not.

JH: As a young man in Wiley High School, for instance, were you very conscious of some of the less desirable factors of the community? Was this a part of your thinking then?

EHLMANN: Yes, it was very much. There were areas in Terre Haute which, as a growing boy, that I was not permitted to enter. And there were parts of it that were off bounds as it were.

JH: Would you mind mentioning where these areas were?

EHLMANN: There was an area known as "Baghdad."

JH: Well now, what was Baghdad?

EHLMANN: Baghdad was the region, the area, in which what we then called "colored people" lived.

JH: Were there very many colored people in Terre Haute?

EHRMANN: I have no idea how many there were, but that was the area in which almost all of them resided. Now, there were a few exceptions to that. A very fine colored family on South 4th Street not far from where I lived. A Mr. Crudip and his family.

JH: Oh. Now, how do you spell that name?

EHRMANN: I have no idea now, but I think it was something like c-r-u-d-i-p or t.

JH: Well, maybe we can look this up. What were some of the other areas?

EHRMANN: On South 7th Street, two saloons, Idaho and Montana, I believe, were their names. I was forbidden (laughs) to go near or in them. On West Main Street /Wabash Avenue/ near the river, that was a region also denied me. And then, of course, in that same general area north of Main Street was the red-light district of Terre Haute which, I understood, ranked with that of Peoria, Illinois, (laughs) as the two worst such places in the Middle West. And my recollection particularly in high school was of a ceaseless battle which local authorities were carrying on with the members of that profession to keep them away from the Indiana Normal School.

JH: Well, but it was very close.

EHRMANN: I believe the boundary line, dividing line, was the alley between either 3rd and 4th or 4th and 5th Streets . . . to hold a line there.

JH: Did you really observe this as a high school student? Did you heed the warnings of your parents or did you steal off and take a peek occasionally?

EHRMANN: No. Only once . . . in my recollection only once did a group of us high school students ride through this area north of Main Street.

JH: And what did you find that one memorable visit?

EHRMANN: Well, it didn't seem so memorable as we were doing it except there were women standing in front of houses, and they waved and yelled at us as we went by. (laughs) Now, that's an honest-to-goodness . . .

JH: Oh, (laughing) I believe it.

EHRMANN: But Baghdad I was in just once, and I never was in Idaho or Montana.

JH: Well, these were just saloons or were these areas?

EHRMANN: These were saloons and the area immediately around them.

JH: You previously spoke of Twelve Points as being somewhat questionable.

EHRMANN: In my recollection, Twelve Points was considered rather questionable except that it was being elevated in my youth when the bank was established there and when other companies located there. And Twelve Points rose in stature quite a bit. And then, of course, Garfield High School, the opening of Garfield High School, I think, had a good deal to do with improving of what area. And churches, there was a very strong Methodist Church in the Twelve Points area.

JH: All right. Now this goes back a little bit to your point of view. Where were you born? What was the address sort of?

EHRMANN: I was born on South 5th Street, 805 South 5th Street; that is 5th and Deming Street.

JH: So, your opinion of the north end was shaded by the fact that you lived in the south end.

EHRMANN: Oh, I grew up believing that the north part of the city was beneath the south . . . the southern part of the city. But I've run into that wherever I . . . in any city that I've ever been. One part of the city looking down on perfectly good people in another part of the city.

JH: I think (laughing) there are many people who live around Collett Park who feel that it's the garden spot of America, you know? It's a beautiful area. Was this not a good area then?

EHRMANN: Oh, Collett Park was a very good area. Yes. Collett Park was. In the south part of the city, South 6th Street, within certain limits, was considered to be a prize place to live.

JH: Now it's a fraternity row.

EHRMANN: Now it's a fraternity row.

JH: Let's go on a little bit to your high school days and some of your impressions of the community. We're interested in the transportation situation. When you were a young man, were horses still prevalent?

EHRMANN: Yes. Horses were, and the warning that I always had from my mother when we played baseball on Deming Street between the alley of 4th to 5th Street and 5th Street was to watch out for runaway horses. I remember when the first automobile entered that area. A Mr. [Charles F.] Haupt had a small car that would come down 5th Street and turn at 5th and Deming and go to the alley and then turn up the alley. We had to be very careful not to be hit by Mr. Haupt's car.

JH: What kind of a car was it? Do you remember?

EHRMANN: I don't remember. Just a small car. I don't recall . . . I don't know what it was.

JH: When did your family first have an automobile?

EHRMANN: Our first car was a Garford (g-a-r-f-o-r-d) Studebaker. A Garford motor in a Studebaker-made body. [It was] 1910, and father had to go to . . . and the family, we went to Chicago to buy the car.

JH: Did you drive it home?

EHRMANN: We drove it home through heavy mud, and it had to be towed out of the mud in the vicinity of Rensselaer, Indiana.

JH: How long did it take you to get from Chicago to Terre Haute?

EHRMANN: I don't recall. It was a long, long difficult trip. But the car was a good car. It, of course, was hand cranked.

JH: How long did you have this car?

EHRMANN: 'Til 1913. Our second car was a 1913 Cadillac, and it was a beauty. It was a great car.

JH: Would you describe it for us?

EHRMANN: It had, I believe, a hundred . . . it was a 4-cylinder car, 120-inch wheel base, as I recall, and with a self-starter! No more cranking! We drove to Niagara Falls in it. This was the first trip that we took in an automobile where we did not have to get out and change tires or to repair blow-outs and punctures all the way. We went to Niagara Falls and back without any tire trouble.

JH: Well, how on earth could that be? The roads were dreadful then, weren't they?

EHRMANN: Yes. They were dreadful. My recollection is that Ohio was one of the first to improve its roads and have very fine roads. Unfortunately, they had those very fine roads so long (laughs) that they ceased to be, but that was a long time ago. That was a long time ago.

JH: And how long did you keep that car then?

EHRMANN: I don't remember just how long we had it. Probably seven or eight years. And then we went to a Franklin car, which was a very fine car. We had two Franklins and then, in 1925, a Packard. It, with the Cadillac, were our two outstanding automobiles. That 1925 Packard was very fine.

JH: Looking back at these automobiles, now the early ones were open touring cars . . .

EHRMANN: Yes.

JH: . . . construction, isn't that right? Do you remember about the . . . putting on the curtains when it rained?

EHRMANN: Yes, and I put on curtains when it rained and had to take them out and dry them and fold them and put them back in the car. Yes.

JH: What was the gasoline situation then? Where did you buy gasoline, do you remember?

EHRMANN: There were filling stations usually in connection with a garage. A garage usually had the pump. As for price, I don't recall. My recollection is that gas and oil were not expensive items.

JH: Now, going on and emphasizing this transportation thing, Terre Haute was a railroad center you'd say.

EHRMANN: It was a railroad center. You had the Pennsylvania line. You had the New York Central System. You had railroads -- the C. & E. I. out of Chicago, the C. & E. I. Terre Haute, of course, was an important stop in the interurban line of which Indiana had such a fine system at one time with interurbans. You could reach almost anyplace in Indiana by using the interurban. We had some traffic on the river, but that was mostly at an earlier time. My great grandfather Thomas Meredith, who had a farm on the high banks of the Wabash below Terre Haute, used to make an annual trip down the Wabash into the Ohio and into the Mississippi to New Orleans to take some articles from his farm and make purchases in New Orleans for the return trip to Terre Haute. But that was an earlier period. I do recall that my high school fraternity, Beta Phi Sigma, had an annual boat ride -- Fourth of July boat ride. We went up the Wabash. We had these two boats -- a paddle-driven boat -- lashed together that went up the river to Clinton, turned around in the late afternoon and drifted down. We listened and danced to the music of a small orchestra that we had aboard as we floated down the Wabash.

JH: Those were times when the youth social activities were a little different oriented, weren't they?

EHRMANN: Yes. The automobile had come in and the high school students' parents usually had one car, and the son or daughter was able to borrow it for a dance. In my case, in addition to the automobile, my mother had, in turn, two electrics -- a Detroit electric and a Baker electric.

JH: Why did she need two?

EHRMANN: One followed the other. I mean . . .

JH: Oh, I'm sorry . . .

EHRMANN: . . . replacement. I'm not sure which came first. The larger one was the Detroit as I recall. It was a handsome affair that would hold four people. It could make speeds up to 25 miles an hour. The batteries had to be recharged every 100 miles, and my job was to use the equipment at night. I had the job of charging the battery for which we had the equipment which had been in the barn on our back yard, a barn that had had two stables. We kept a horse. That gave way to a reworking of the interior

EHRMANN: of the barn into a garage with a concrete floor. And we had the rectifier there, and we had space for two cars in the garage which still stands.

JH: Did you ever, yourself, drive the electric or was this reserved for your mother?

EHRMANN: Oh, yes, I drove the electric and preferred to drive it to dances, because dances being in the winter time, my partner and I could come out, get in the electric and drive right away. Whereas my sister had the Cadillac, and her escort had to work quite hard to get . . . oftentimes had to work very hard to get the car started. So, I was usually off and away before my sister and her date.

JH: Well, now this meant that you were really somewhat privileged, didn't it though? There were many students surely who didn't . . .

EHRMANN: We were privileged in that we had an electric, but we were not alone at all. There were many cars by 1916 when I graduated from Wiley. There were, of course, many cars and many large and very fine cars.

JH: Where were the dances held?

EHRMANN: I belonged to the Beta Phi Sigma fraternity. Our dances were held usually at the Elks Club and at the Knights of Pythias Hall.

JH: Where was the Knight of Pythias? Do you remember?

EHRMANN: It was, I think, over on 8th Street around Walnut but I'm not certain.

JH: Yes.

EHRMANN: And the Elks hall was the one just north of Main Street on 7th Street.

JH: This is now a part of Indiana State University.

EHRMANN: Yes. So except for our proms -- junior prom and senior prom -- I do not recall that we had other high school dances. The dances that I went to were the high school fraternity dances.

JH: What was the social life of a high school at that time? Now you didn't have movies to go . . . yes, you did, too.

EHRMANN: Oh, yes. The movies were very popular, particularly around 1915 and '16 when there were several movie houses that were open. There was what? The Hippodrome and what was the one on Main Street?

JH: Well, there was the Liberty. There was . . .

EHRMANN: There was . . . I don't remember the names. I know there were two vaudeville houses on Main Street. And one of them . . . one of the vaudeville houses, the one on the north side of the street (I believe this was between 7th and 8th Street), became then a movie house. And that's where we went to see Charlie Chaplin and the Mack Sennett pictures.

JH: I'm interested in finding out something about your view of the political situation in Terre Haute.

EHRMANN: The big event occurred around 1916 when over 100 members of the Democratic administration were arrested and tried before Judge (what's his name) Kennesaw Landis, Judge Landis, for tampering with a federal election (I believe it was the election of the United States Senator) and received sentences from a year and a day up to seven years. There were over 100 of these, and I believe all or almost all of the officials of the city and county were caught in this except the Prosecuting Attorney. He was not.

JH: Did this mean then a sudden reversal in political force in Terre Haute?

EHRMANN: I'm not in a position to judge that. My feeling was that after a few years one didn't seem to notice that there had been much difference.

JH: What was the law enforcement at that time? Did you consider it good?

EHRMANN: In general, there was safety on the streets. I don't recall acts of violence on the street such as we have today. There were policemen who walked beats and the policemen knew the people in the area he walked. He knew you by name. I don't recall muggings and things of that sort. There was, of course, pocket-picking. We had a fairgrounds and a great deal of activity at the fairgrounds. And we had a baseball park. And we had a circus lot and there were circuses. The circumstances were good for plying the trade of pickpocket. But otherwise, the only other element

EHRMANN: that I was warned against, and perhaps unjustly, were the gypsies.

JH: And who were the gypsies?

EHRMANN: The gypsies came and set up shop in the low areas across the Wabash River. There were areas which they occupied for some time and then they came into the residential section and rang doorbells. They told fortunes. They read palms. We were warned against them -- that they might rob us and that they might kidnap children. That was a very common belief, that the gypsies would kidnap children, and I was strenuously warned to come indoors and not to go near a gypsy.

JH: Do you think this was justified?

EHRMANN: I think it was greatly overrated. I am sure there was some petty . . . I'm reasonably sure there was petty thieving. If they saw anything lying around, they probably were tempted to take it. I don't recall any case of kidnapping being established or proven against them or any being reported, any child being reported kidnapped.

JH: Do you have any idea who these people really were?

EHRMANN: No, except what the gypsy is supposed to be. They're supposed to be an Asian, a middle Asian people.

JH: I've been led to believe that it's almost a tribe.

EHRMANN: And tribes, yes, and I've heard lectures on the gypsies by the National Geographic people in which they speak of them as originating in tribes in India and the east of India. And then their westward movement is pretty well charted. When they reached Europe and when they reached various countries in Europe and when they reached England and Scotland and when they came across the Atlantic, that, I believe, now is pretty well documented.

JH: It seems to me (is this a possibility) that our opinion of gypsies during this earlier period influenced our feeling about camping generally which is now totally acceptable. And yet, wasn't there a period when people who camped were considered just a little strange?

EHRMANN: I don't really know about that, because I don't

EHRMANN: seem to recall campsites. Such camping that I recall having been done, I believe was done in Turkey Run under some control condition. People did go camping. As a Boy Scout, we went hiking and might pitch a tent. Only my troop preferred to sleep in the hayloft of some farmer's barn.

JH: Now, you've told us something about the political situation, what was the religious climate of the community at that time?

EHRMANN: Well, there were many churches. The protestant churches, certain ones, were very strong as I look back on it. We were Methodists, and we had three very strong Methodist churches in First Methodist Church on 7th and . . . was it Poplar?

JH: There was one on Poplar. That's correct.

EHRMANN: 7th and Poplar. Centenary Church on 7th Street -- North 7th Street -- and the Maple Avenue Methodist Church.

JH: Was there interaction between the various religious communities as there is today?

EHRMANN: Yes, there was an organization of the Protestant churches. Now, other churches that were strong There was a strong Baptist Church, churches. There were strong Baptist churches and strong Christian churches. There was a strong Christian church north of Main Street near the public library.

JH: Was there a division of thinking between the Catholic and the Jewish and the Protestant communities?

EHRMANN: Well, then there was a strong Catholic community, St. Benedict church and St. Joseph's church in particular, and there was a Catholic parochial school system. Now, also there was a German Methodist church and there were German churches. German protestant churches.

JH: Now, what happened to this division? What happened to the German protestant churches? We don't hear of these today. Were these absorbed?

EHRMANN: My family on my father's side -- the Ehrmann family -- belonged to the German Methodist church. I don't know what they all did, but I do recall learning that my father left the German Methodist church and went over to the Asbury Chapel, which later became the

EHRMANN: First Methodist Church.

JH: That's the one on Poplar Street there.

EHRMANN: On Poplar Street. The Asbury Chapel, I believe, was on South 4th Street.

JH: Oh, originally. I see.

EHRMANN: Originally, and that's where my father met my mother and where they courted -- in the Epworth League of the Methodist church of the Asbury Chapel.

JH: Now were you . . .

EHRMANN: And DePauw University, before it was DePauw University, was Indiana Asbury. If you go to Washington and out 16th Street, you'll see Bishop Asbury astride his horse, riding his circuit. When I was a small boy and learned that a great, great (I believe it was) grandfather of mine had been a circuit rider, I was very impressed, because I thought for a while he had been a circus rider.

JH: But now what was a circuit rider, really? What did this really mean?

EHRMANN: He preached by riding the country and going to the various communities and preaching and baptizing and marrying and giving communion.

JH: Was this his sole means of support?

EHRMANN: I've always assumed it was. I don't know but I always assumed that the Methodist circuit rider that was his full activity and he had a number of groups to visit.

JH: Do you have any idea how big a range his . . .

EHRMANN: I have no idea.

JH: Times change.

EHRMANN: Times change but he carried the gospel as the Methodist saw it.

END OF SIDE 1

JH: Dr. Ehrmann, continuing our discussion of religious activity in the community, was there a Jewish community?

EHRMANN: There was a Jewish community, a strong Jewish community with a temple, the Temple Israel on South 6th Street. There was an association of the protestant churches, as I recall, and in 1915, I believe it was, the protestant churches combined to bring an evangelist to Terre Haute -- a Reverend Milford Lyons (l-y-o-n-s). A large tent was erected. I believe it was on Walnut Street down by the railroad tracks. I'm not certain of that location, and it had a tremendous effect for a short while, I would say, as a result of the activities with many conversions reported. He was considered an outstanding evangelist. My life impinged on him in that I was president of my class at Wiley High School, as I said. We were coming up to our junior prom, and we were asked not to have that dance. And my minister, my pastor, called me in and asked me if I would cancel the dance.

My pastor was a very fine gentleman, a DePauw graduate, whom I liked very much. I'm sure it was a distasteful thing to both of us. I told him that I was president of the class, but all I could say or do . . . as presiding officer, I would receive a motion, and it would be up to the class. At the class meeting no one ever proposed (laughing) that it be discontinued. The motion then did not have to be put and was not voted on, and my partner and I led the Grand March at the dance.

JH: What was the attitude of the school toward this?

EHRMANN: The school took an aloof position. No pressure of any kind /that/ I recall on me. I recall no discussion at all with the principal or any members of the faculty.

JH: Now, all of this came about because the Methodists at that time were against dancing, weren't they?

EHRMANN: Yes. The Methodists were. If the Methodists' discipline was observed, there were no circuses, theatrical performances, no dancing, no wearing of gold jewelry, no card playing, no drinking.

JH: What about motion pictures?

EHRMANN: Theatre, which would include motion pictures, was forbidden.

JH: Well, you didn't observe all of this.

EHRMANN: No. I just said I led the Grand March at the dance. Now, my family, my parents, were very devout Methodists. But on this matter of the discipline, my mother did not regard that as a vital part of the Methodist faith and the Methodist activity. My father was superintendent of Sunday School for years, 25 or more years. I was the assistant secretary of the Sunday School. My mother was head of the primary department. [She was] very active in the work of the Methodist church in quilting and in church services and was an officer in the Women's Home Missionary Society which meant Methodist-supported institutions in the United States, as distinct from foreign missionary work. She believed that there was a domestic problem that was more important to her and others than the foreign missionary, and she visited any number of Methodist-supported homes and schools in the South and secured money for them.

JH: Well, did you not feel then that your not observing these various restrictions was wicked?

EHRMANN: No. I had no sense of such feeling and none was ever encouraged in me. Now the problem with dancing had to be faced. My sister was two-and-a-half years older, and so the problem of dancing arose with her. There was no problem. She danced! I came along and, being a boy and a little on the awkward side, had no difficulty at all in getting formal dancing instruction in which we were very fortunate in Terre Haute in having several but in particular, a very fine dancing instructor who . . .

JH: Who were they?

EHRMANN: Well, one who also had a very fine leather business [was] Oscar Duenweg, who was a very distinguished looking gentleman with a goatee, and a superb dancer. And he and his assistants tried to teach me the two-step and to waltz.

JH: You said there were other instructors.

EHRMANN: Well, I don't know. There were more, but he was an outstanding one. My sister had lessons from him, and so I came along . . . And he knew the family.

JH: Was this by way of a school or was this . . .

EHRMANN: Yes. There was a hall. I think it was on Main Street, and I think it was between 7th and 8th streets, upstairs -- a ballroom. And that was where he had his classes; I think it was one or two nights a week, and I had two terms with him.

JH: How do you account for the ability to be a good church member and still not observe all of these restrictions?

EHRMANN: That presented no problem because after all, the Methodists do not claim that there had been "laying on of hands" or any of that scene, that there was anything attached They see him as one who had been a member of the Church of England (as his followers were) and who felt that the Church of England was not reaching the people, particularly not reaching the less fortunate people in the cities and towns. They felt there was a whole urban working class population not being properly served by the Church of England. So the irony of it is, the Methodists start out by bringing religion to those people and ministering to them. And as time went on, the Methodists sort of rose in stature; and then you had other institutions -- other bodies -- coming in to pick up the people who were left as the Methodists rose in position.

JH. I think we want, before we wind this session up certainly, to talk about your relationship with Max Ehrmann whom we consider Terre Haute's poet. He was a very distinguished philosopher in retrospect. In his time, do you feel that he enjoyed a distinguished reputation?

EHRMANN: As far back as I know, he had a very fine local reputation which extended beyond that. I first became aware of my Uncle Max as an individual in the short time he lived in our home at 5th and Deming Street. And what I remember principally, because I was only about 7 or perhaps 8 years old at the time, was that he had a steam engine. And when I would be invited into his room, he would put some water in the boiler, and he would light the steam. He'd produce the steam that rotated wheels. There was activity with his steam engine and that interested me very much.

JH: Does this mean that he had a scientific turn of mind as well as literary?

EHRMANN: I don't think you could push it very far that way.

EHRMANN: He had, as [did] many educated people in the 19th century, an interest in science. Science hadn't gotten so differentiated and so particularized but what you could have that. A well-educated person would have some knowledge of science.

JH: Now, was this after he had graduated from DePauw?

EHRMANN: Oh, yes. He graduated from DePauw in the class of 1890, I believe, then had two years at Harvard as a graduate student in philosophy. And there he had an unusually fine group of professors as his teachers. There probably was no university in the country in the [18]90's that had as strong a philosophy department as Harvard with Hugo Minsterburg, Josiah Royce, William James, Professor Palmer, young Santayana. It was an extremely strong department.

JH: What did he do then when he left?

EHRMANN: My knowledge of the chronology of his life is not very precise. I know that he came back to Terre Haute. He read law. He was admitted to the bar. He was, I think, the assistant prosecuting attorney at one time and had courtroom experience. When I was a high school student, he was representing the Ehrmann Manufacturing Company as their attorney, principally in writing letters to firms and individuals that owed (laughs) the Ehrmann Manufacturing Company money.

JH: What did the Ehrmann Manufacturing Company manufacture?

EHRMANN: They manufactured workmen's clothing -- coveralls and . . . perhaps not coveralls in the present sense. These were largely white overalls that painters and plasterers wore. And then, [they also made] blue denims, working ones. They, the one that I admired very much (because I worked after school hours one year at the Ehrmann Manufacturing Company and I worked after my sophomore year at Yale in the factory) . . . well, the one I admired were the "1815" (1-8-1-5) overall, which was a very heavy, very sturdy blue denim overall with rivets at the corners of all the pockets. [They were] highly reinforced and [were] sold particularly in the Oregon-Washington (state of Washington) communities. The brand of overalls they made was called the "Never-wear-out" brand, and I don't believe "1815" wore out.

JH: Do you have any idea how long the manufactory existed? When did it cease to . . .

EHRMANN: I don't know when. It was started by my Uncles Albert and Emil, and my father was not associated with that. Max, as I've indicated, was of some assistance as a legal adviser, a legal counsel, and my Aunt Matilda Ehrmann was married to Frederick Reckert. (I believe he was Frederick A. Reckert.) He was the father of Frederick C. Reckert. He was in the Ehrmann overall factory. And then later the daughter, Helen Reckert, who was married to Russell Allen . . . later both Frederick -- young Frederick Reckert -- and, several years later, Russell Allen were connected with the Ehrmann overall company.

JH: Where was that located?

EHRMANN: That was on Main Street down by the railroad tracks on the south side of the street. On the near side of the tracks /929-933 Wabash Avenue/.

JH: This would be around 1st or 2nd Street?

EHRMANN: No, no, no.

JH: Oh, you were clear out on the East End then.

EHRMANN: East end. We were in the railroad time -- 9th, 10th, 11th Street. The Glidden people are in that building now.

JH: Is that the same building?

EHRMANN: Yes. The building stands.

JH: Oh!

EHRMANN: . . . And the Glidden people are in it. A place was held for me for a while. That's why I worked there the end of my sophomore year so that I could see whether I wanted a career in the overall business. But I'd decided that question in the third grade, and the answer was no.

JH: They hoped you would.

EHRMANN: They hoped I would. My Uncle Albert was not too happy over that decision. He didn't think too highly of one being a professor. Frederick Reckert was a very distinguished chemist in being. And they wanted

EHRMANN: very much at Yale, when he graduated, for him to stay on and do graduate work in chemistry. And he had that pull and he put it aside. I turned it down.

Russell Allen, who was a teacher, a teacher of languages in the Brooklyn Polytechnic, came out and tried it for a while. He had been a professor.

And of Emil Ehrmann's two sons, neither went in the overall business. Don became a bank president, and Dick, an educator and sociologist at the University of Florida. In later life he was dean of Cornell College in Iowa. And I was, of course, [a] professor, so that suddenly the family (laughs) became very academic.

JH: Well, and Max rejected it.

EHRMANN: And Max rejected it, also.

JH: Do you have any knowledge of the period when he gave up working there and pursuing law and decided to become a full time philosopher?

EHRMANN: I don't. I have no knowledge of that, because when I came . . . started calling on, dropping in on (I never dropped in on him) . . . calling him or arranging . . . because as . . . I never Our relations were very close, but I wasn't apt to barge in on him when he might be resting or something like that.

JH: What was your viewpoint of him?

EHRMANN: Oh, I liked him very much. I thought of Terre Haute in my limited circles here because I was away at college. [Of] my limited acquaintances he was one of the few, if not almost the few . . . the only intell---- . . . what I thought was an intellectual. He was a philosopher that I knew. Now my cousin Fred Reckert would have been a brilliant chemist, a man of great scientific ability. There was a man Bindley (Bruce, I believe, was his first name).

JH: That's right.

EHRMANN: And he was a very thoughtful person, too. I don't think he was in any sense . . . well, he was no trained philosopher or trained historian or anything that way. But he was a man of intelligence and general conversation. He was an interesting person.

JH: Do you think then that there were enough people in the community to continue to stimulate Max Ehrmann's life?

EHRMANN: There were some friends that he had, and he regarded them highly. Your father was one of them, at Indiana Normal School /now Indiana State University/. And that group he lunched with at . . . I believe it was the YWCA where they went. I used to join them there. I think he knew the few people that were of that kind. Now, he was an acquaintance of . . . more than that, he was . . . I think he knew rather well Eugene Debs, at one time. But they parted over the question of the United States in World War I. Uncle Max supported the war.

JH: And Debs did not.

EHRMANN: And Debs did not, and I believe didn't Debs go to prison?

JH: Yes. That's correct.

EHRMANN: . . . over that.

JH: But do you think . . . I don't think of Max Ehrmann as being so narrow-minded that a difference of opinion would alter his total relationship.

EHRMANN: Oh, he wasn't. He was tolerant of people's political views as he was tolerant of their religious views. He carried his life as a philosopher. I mean he lived his life as a philosopher in that way. It was not a narrow . . . he was not an intolerant person.

JH: Where did he live?

EHRMANN: Well, on South 6th Street in I believe what was the second block below Main Street /Wabash Avenue/ in a small apartment. It had a room as you went in and a back room that was a study . . . a room next to it was a study. And he had a bedroom. I believe it was a 3-room apartment.

JH: So these were very modest "diggings," so to speak.

EHRMANN: They were modest "diggings." And the "diggings" in his study, /located/ a few feet away from the entrance room as you looked down on the back, had books

EHRMANN:and papers and a big writing table [which] was where he worked.

Last night . . . in the talk last evening [at the annual dinner of the Vigo County Historical Society] I tried to make two points, and I had Max Ehrmann in mind. You have a community here that had a great many advantages, but it was a hard and tough town, politically and in terms of relations with labor and capital. It was a difficult town in many ways. A river town, that's what I think of.

Now, you come into a community of that sort, and you have the ideals of a philosopher. Someone else comes in and decides he's a professional man; he becomes a lawyer or a physician. He becomes a banker or whatnot. There's an infinite . . . not an infinite, but there's about as many different ways to live a life in a community of that sort as there are people, at least a very considerable number. And I'm always interested in . . . what is my first point [is] that you come into that community, and you adjust yourself to the circumstances of that community, and you try to achieve your goals and ambitions as best you can in that kind of a community if the composition of that community is so varied -- all kinds of people. Now, Max Ehrmann did that sufficiently successfully to continue to reside in Terre Haute and to love the place. And every one of us to have fruitful lives has to do something like that. We've got to make that adjustment to our community. And then, in making that adjustment, you do your part in influencing your community.

Now, where Terre Haute fell down, there weren't enough people influencing the community in what we might say, "good ways." We needed more. We had a few people and they had a special name. They were philanthropists. That was the term that was in use. They were people who were civic-minded and who had or commanded money. So that was my first point last evening. That kind of . . . Max found such a place for himself in Terre Haute.

Now, the other thing . . . the other point was (and I only spent four or five minutes last night on that) [that] Terre Haute is [but] one little place in the larger state of Indiana in the Midwest and in the whole United States and in the whole world. But the responsibility of the individual in adjusting transcends his environment. If he's going to be a worthwhile person, he must also contribute to the life of

EHRMANN: the whole. And then I ended by saying, we have given up, abandoned the idea of the melting pot. We're reaching the point now where English is regarded as just another language along with Hindu or Sanskrit or something else. And just as soon as we do that, we lose one of our most important binding, unifying things, and that's what this country is now faced with. We are no longer making Americans [just] as Rome finally reached a point where they were no longer turning out Romans. And once you do that, you're doomed.

JH: Do you feel then that there are pitfalls in diversity?

EHRMANN: In diversity?

JH: Yes.

EHRMANN: No, there's a proper place for languages which is [that] they are the second . . . they're your second language. They should not be your first. Have all the languages in the world. Good heavens, I wish I had more. I've had some Latin and some medieval Latin, German, French and Italian. I wish I had a Slavic language or two.

JH: But still you feel that the dominant . . .

EHRMANN: The dominant must be English, and we must work within an English-speaking framework, and our philosophy must be the philosophy of that.

JH: Do you think Max Ehrmann's writings reflected this thought, too?

EHRMANN: No, it wasn't something that we were as conscious of as we are now. We didn't have the problem of the decline and decay of English.

JH: That's true.

EHRMANN: That's something new and it's so dangerous, because in a generation it can undo us.

JH: I am told that during World War I, German -- the teaching of German -- was discontinued at Indiana State, which was then the Normal School. Was that a good thing?

EHRMANN: No, I don't think . . . I don't think so. I think

EHRMANN: the time to study languages is in a time of war. And before, on the eve of the war, when you need people . . . we need people who know Russian, so we know what the Russians are up to. The worse conditions are, the more important their language is and anything else that tells something about them.

No, in World War II we had Japanese language schools, Chinese language schools, Russian language schools in all our principal universities. Michigan had a great center for Japanese studies. Far from . . . they just did the wrong thing!

JH: Do you think that our viewpoints now have been totally changed because of transportation? Isn't this really getting back to the fact that so many people have traveled all over the world that our thinking changes?

EHRMANN: That won't save English. What [harms] English are the persistence within our population of people of foreign background who refuse to learn and use English. And it persists in the language of their childhood. They're not the people who are doing the traveling and all that sort of thing. They're the people . . . they're the solid masses. They're the people [such as] the Mexican people in the Los Angeles area. They're not internationally minded. I mean they are not . . . they aren't interested in English. They just want to speak Spanish -- the Mexican version of Spanish. They're not interested even in the good Spanish.

JH: I'd like to . . .

EHRMANN: That's fatal to a country.

JH: You lose the cohesiveness then?

EHRMANN: In order to achieve, we have to be cohesive in our language and in our philosophy of life. We can have ranges in things, but we don't all have to have the same religion. We don't all have to be Republicans or Democrats. But we mustn't be destructive of our civilization. We mustn't, and the first thing we must hang on to -- first and above all -- we must hang on to our common language which unifies us.

JH: I'd like to return for a moment to Max Ehrmann again and your relationship with him. You said that you enjoyed him.

EHRMANN: Yes. When I came back, I always saw him and saw him several times. He followed my career. I read many of his things. I've not read all the things, and so many of the things I read years ago. And we used to discuss some of the problems which are presented in his journal. Some he would read me sometimes, something that he was working on.

JH: Could you tell us what you think his viewpoint then was of his position in the community? Did he envision himself as the philosopher of the area? Or did he continue this life, which was somewhat lonely, wasn't it?

EHRMANN: Yes. Now, I don't know how much social life he had. He knew Bertha Pratt King, Miss King. He was on the board I believe of the King Classical School. He was I think one of its trustees. He had some activities in that connection. That was his social life. He later married her. They were not married very long. He died in 1945, as I recall. And then Bertha continued, did a remarkably devoted and fine job of editing, and got the many of his volumes out. And I think he was very, very fortunate with her. Did you know her?

JH: Yes, I did although I didn't know her as well as many of the people who attended the King Classical School which I did not.

EHRMANN: My sister attended it.

JH: Of course, that was down near where you lived.

EHRMANN: And Crawford School was another tough one. That was a tough school I went to.

JH: Was it?

EHRMANN: The only thing was, I was a rather . . . I was a solid, rather tough chap myself.

JH: Were you a tough kid?

EHRMANN: I was not an impolite or ill-mannered person, but I wasn't pushed around. I reached the point in the school where there were only three boys in that school that could lick me, which was the test of it. And no one of the boys that could lick me ever attempted to, or ever fought me. I didn't challenge their position, and they didn't bother me. I had to fight the boys who were below me who were trying to get into my position.

JH: Was there a lot of fighting?

EHRMANN: There was a lot of fighting. I remember one time coming out of school and coming back going up the alley behind the Crawford School. You come up to Park Street and then go over to 4th, then go up to 5th. I liked to walk the alleys and then go up the alley and come into my place around the rear. And I found a big figure (well, he was only my size) blocking the way in the alley. And he came at me. And I grasped him, and we wrestled, and I got him down, because I was pretty good at rough-and-tumble fighting and got astride him. And I didn't abuse him in any way. I just held him down. And the next thing I knew, my head was hit and my shoulders were hit. [While] holding Felix (that was his name) . . . holding Felix down, I looked up, and there was his mother, and she was clobbering me.

JH: Did they live near you?

EHRMANN: They lived at the corner of the alley. They lived at the house at the corner there. She must have known that he was going to try and get me, and she came out to protect her boy. And she did and so I got up and got off of him. I never touched her, and I backed away, and I told her he had suddenly set upon me and I didn't know what this was all about. That was Felix, a name very easily remembered.

JH: What did he have against you?

EHRMANN: I haven't any idea. I never knew. I think he was just challenging my position. I never knew what was . . . Now, I had another one who was really a . . . Felix was just a big clumsy boy. I had another boy there whose father up 3rd Street had the Coca Cola bottling . . . [the] little Coca Cola bottling plant. And he was a little taller . . . Is this going on the tape?

JH: Um hm.

EHRMANN: I don't want to get into personality about this sort of thing.

JH: No, of course not, but I would be interested in your telling us something about the school.

EHRMANN: Am I on now?

JH: Yes, you are.

EHRMANN: All right. Well, the Crawford School was a really very good school with very good teachers, and the principal was an unusually fine and able woman, Helen Tyler.

JH: How do you spell that name?

EHRMANN: I think it was T-y-l-e-r. I believe. Helen Tyler. And the 7th grade teacher, Miss Duncan (d-u-n-c-a-n), was a stern disciplinarian Scot; but she was a fine person, too. And my relations with those two women were very good. On graduation from grade school, I won the school award which was a five-dollar gold piece.

JH: Oh, mercy!

EHRMANN: And I've forgotten the name of the donor, but it was one of the bank people. It was probably someone connected with the Crawford family I suppose. I don't know what has happened to that five-dollar piece. It disappeared a long time ago.

JH: Well, what was the discipline within the school? You said Miss Duncan was a strong disciplinarian.

EHRMANN: It didn't take much more than her glance and a few sharp commands; the people swung into line, and, basically, they liked her.

JH: Is this because this was supported by the parents?

EHRMANN: Yes, of course. Because the parents always [did] . . . except this incident I was going to mention where the son was expelled and the parent was not cooperative in that case. That was most unusual. The parents were cooperative, and they would say to a child when he got home, "All right. You behave or I'll give you a caning," or a whipping or whatever the punishment was.

JH: Did they whip children in schools then?

EHRMANN: Yes. They switched them on the legs. I don't recall people being turned over knees and paddled, but they were switched. The schools had that, the caning, yes. I was never caned in school at all, anything that way.

JH: Did your father switch you?

EHRMANN: No, not my father.

JH: You mother maybe?

EHRMANN: My mother switched me once, I think, in all my life a little bit on the legs. But I think it was only once, and I didn't take it too seriously. And she felt . . . I don't know how she felt about it. But, no, I never was subjected to a physical thing, and I was never subjected to what we might call a "bawling out" by my parents.

JH: Going back to the school atmosphere, there are so many problems seemingly today.

EHRMANN: The parents supported the school. The school had a framework of discipline, and beyond the parent, if the parent had given trouble, all down the line the teacher would have been supported.

JH: Well now, if a child were expelled, what happened then?

EHRMANN: He could make his peace and get back in if he wanted to.

JH: What if he didn't?

EHRMANN: Well, he had to go to school to a certain age. Sixteen, I believe it was. I think probably they'd have given him another school. They might have given him another school and another teacher. I do not know of any case where that happened.

JH: I was just curious. Now, there was such a thing as a truant officer at that time?

EHRMANN: There was a truant officer, and he could discipline. But the main thing was, if you didn't show up at school, to find out why. Go 'round, call at the house, and find out from the parents whether the child was . . . whether the parents might not know if this

EHRMANN: boy was playing hooky.

JH: Well, that's true.

EHRMANN: Or if they did know, court action could be taken against parents who . . . in cases of not seeing that their children went to school. And the whole system supported the school and the teacher.

JH: What were the course offerings for a student in grade school at that time? What were your subjects?

EHRMANN: Well, I don't remember them very well except as I get down towards the end, I know that all along we seem to have had lots of spelling. And we had spelling bees (and I enjoyed them no end) where you were lined up and you spelled words. And if you didn't spell one correctly, you moved down one. And if you spelled a word that the man ahead of you couldn't spell, you moved up one. Your whole ambition was to be No. 1. And you remained No. 1 until you misspelled a word; then you went down to the very foot of the line and worked your way up again. We had that.

Then we had writing lessons. And, of course, the penmanship was the Spencerian one and a very fine penmanship. And we had mathematics; arithmetic we had. And we had English literature, and we had history. I believe in the sixth grade it was English history, and I think it was European in the seventh. And I'm pretty sure it was those three. In the eighth grade it was American history.

JH: Did you have any manual arts at all?

EHRMANN: Yes. Manual arts training was introduced in the Crawford School my senior year, and then (I think it was once a week for a half a day) we went over to the Fairbanks School. And we walked over to Fairbanks, so a good part of our time was spent in walking over there. And there was our manual training. And I learned to use the plane, the saw, the screw driver, the hammer, and to make simple things. I used the plane, and I was inspired by all that to buy myself some very good tools. I still have that Stanley plane, which was an excellent one. But we made bread boards. We finally put things together to make little stands, something you could give your mother. My mother always professed (laughingly) to be greatly pleased with these things that came to her. I thought,

EHRMANN: at the time, it was pretty good. And, as I say, I purchased tools so I could have my own at home. And in looking back on it, I think that was all very fine.

Then there was home economics for the girls.

JH: So, the girls didn't get the manual training?

EHRMANN: They didn't get the manual training. There was that distinction, but the boys didn't take baking and . . .

JH: I think today that's reversed. I think the boys and girls both take both subjects now in many schools.

EHRMANN: I think they'd be better because chefs, after all, are men. And then men have to cook. Even if they're married, they still . . . 'Cause most of my friends get many of their meals, so that the idea of separation of that's not . . . I don't think that's valid any more. But we had the manual training. Our American history was quite good. We had a nice little, very small reference library in a bookcase at the back of the classroom. Any one of us was free at any time, when we had a few minutes, to go up to the bookcase and take a book out and then replace it later in the day.

JH: Did you have prayers in the school?

EHRMANN: I don't recall the matter of prayers one way or the other. They don't seem to have made an impression on me. I don't know that we did.

JH: But there was no law against it, certainly.

EHRMANN: No. There was no law against it, and I don't recall oaths of allegiance.

JH: You didn't salute the flag and do these things?

EHRMANN: I don't think we had them, that sort of thing. This was from grade school and in 1912. Those other things would come with World War I in 1917 and '18.

JH: I see.

EHRMANN: There wasn't much occasion for that.

We made trips on rare occasions. We saw the

EHRMANN Liberty Bell when it came to Union Station, and the teachers took us. I don't know how. I think we must have taken the south 3rd Street streetcar (laughs) and eventually got to the Union Station. We always marched around in two's holding hands with the teachers herding us. And I remember the Liberty Bell. And with a little girl, I was marching with a little girl.

[a] But there wasn't much of that. And there wasn't parent-teachers' association.

JH: How did you dress as a grade school student?
What kind of clothing did you wear?

EHRMANN: Well, I had a jacket and under the jacket I had . . . and I had short trousers.

JH: How long did you wear short trousers?

EHRMANN: I wore short trousers until in the course of my freshman year at Wiley. The second semester of my freshman year I shifted into long trousers.

JH: Now, were these knickers?

EHRMANN: No. These were long trousers.

JH: No, I meant earlier. . . .

EHRMANN: They weren't knickers. No. They were tight. They're the kind you see in the old pictures of bicycle riders. They were tight up to here.

JH: They came to the knee then?

EHRMANN: They came to the knee -- above the knee.

JH: Did you wear long socks?

EHRMANN: I wore long, heavy socks.

JH: Did they come clear up over your knee?

EHRMANN: And they came over the knee.

JH: What held them up?

EHRMANN: Garters.

JH: You had garters (laughs). All right.

EHLMANN: Garter belt of some kind (chuckles). It was a circular band, held up by a garter, and mine were very heavy.

END OF TAPE

TAPE 2

JH: Continuing our discussion with Dr. Howard Ehlmann concerning his early elementary schooling, we were discussing clothing.

You were speaking of having short pants and long stockings. Were these wool stockings or cotton . . . ?

EHLMANN: Depending upon the season. I don't recall. I think my stockings were cotton. I don't recall woolen stockings.

JH: Did you wear long underwear?

EHLMANN: Oh, I wore long underwear. Yes. I wore long underwear and stockings and garters, or a garter belt. And the trousers were short and tight, and when I was a little younger -- my first years -- I wore what were called "knee protectors" which were a kind of pad that you put on around your knees, because boys played marbles. And in playing marbles, they kneeled. And if you didn't wear a knee protector, well your knee might get sore but . . .

JH: It wore your stockings out!

EHLMANN: You wore out your stockings! When I was very young, I called them "knee-er 'tectors."

JH: (laughing) Well, then you acceded to the long pants only after you went into high school.

EHLMANN: High school, the beginning of the second semester. I can still remember my feeling of awkwardness as I went in and one of my teachers, my English instructor whom I liked very much and who was one of my close friends all through high school -- Anna Hayward, who lived on South Center Street. And when I came back from Yale, I always called on Anna Hayward. She was a DePauw graduate. She was an Alpha Phi at DePauw. She was an awfully nice person. I was very fond of my Wiley High School faculty. They were awfully nice people.

EHRMANN: Well. Now, where are we?

JH: We're back on clothing. We want to finish this up. You said that . . .

EHRMANN: The shirt . . . I don't remember much about the shirt and there must have been a shirt and a tie, of course. And I wore a jacket, and I don't recall what kind of an overcoat I had. When I was a little older, I can tell you the make of clothing. Mother would take me to Joseph's clothing on Main Street. There was Myers', and Tune's and Joseph's and there were some others. And I wore Society brand clothes, which we got for me at Joseph's (that was when I was in high school). A blue serge suit was the important item in . . . but they slicked up a little, so you could wear them 'bout so long, and then they were work clothes.

JH: Well, now you didn't wear these . . . Did you wear a suit to school or did you wear . . .?

EHRMANN: I've no recollection of that. I've a recollection of the trousers, and I know I must have had a jacket of some kind, and I know I had an overcoat, but I don't recall.

JH: I'm . . . I'll bet you . . .

EHRMANN: And I had a cap!

JH: Yeah. That's what I was going to say.

EHRMANN: And I had a cap and my hair was not awfully short. My hair was medium cut.

JH: Did any of the high school fellows grow a beard or a mustache?

EHRMANN: No. We had nothing that way.

JH: Was it not permitted or just not in style?

EHRMANN: It didn't occur to anyone to do it. No one thought of that. Beards and mustaches were worn by older men. They weren't worn by high school students.

JH: Were they out of style at that period by some chance? Generally speaking?

EHRMANN: For young men, yes. I don't recall anyone in

EHRMANN: my fraternity at DePauw that had a beard or a mustache. And they were in the 18-to-22, 23-year-old [age bracket]. They didn't have them.

JH: How old were you when World War I started?

EHRMANN: Well, World War I began in 19-- . . . started in August of 1914. I was 16.

JH: What was your attitude at that time?

EHRMANN: My attitude at that time was I believed that the Germans were responsible for the war and that they had no business being in France, and I sympathized with the French and the Belgians.

JH: Well, now as someone of a German background, did this create any conflict in your family?

EHRMANN: No. There was no conflict at all in the family. As I said earlier that Uncle Max supported the war. No, my mother, of course, was English and Scotch; and my father My German blood stems from the Revolution of 1848 and the influx of Germans that came in [to America] in '49 and through the 50's. That's when my German grandparents came over. In the 1850's. They were not Prussian. They had no use for Prussianism. They were Rhinelanders. They were from Baden, and I'm not certain . . . I think from near Heidelberg. But they were not Prussian Germans at all.

JH: Well, now there was a pretty fair-sized German community in Terre Haute.

EHRMANN: There was a German community. Now, I mentioned that my father broke from that (I think I started to say that) and he got into the Asbury Chapel because he wanted to get away from that German background. They went to beer gardens and drank a lot of beer, and father was [for] temperance. Father was president of the anti-saloon league later on here in life -- in his life here in Terre Haute. And he separated from his beer-drinking German people . . . German people.

JH: Was it a separation . . . was it a theological separation or was it . . .

EHRMANN: No, I don't think father was . . .

JH: . . . social?

EHRMANN: . . . bothered too much by theology. I don't think he accepted the beliefs of the church. He believed them, but he was Father read a great deal, but he didn't read . . . he was not interested in details of religions, dogmas, or such matters. He was superintendent of the Sunday School. He read the Bible; he knew the Bible fairly well. Mother knew it better.

JH: So your mother was really your religious guide?

EHRMANN: Yes, my mother was my religious guide.

JH: Which is kind of a tradition, isn't it?

EHRMANN: It's a tradition. In my family I was close to both my parents; I was closer to my mother. My sister was closer to father. If I wanted anything, I went to my mother; if she wanted anything, she went to her father. Neither one of us thought there was anything odd or strange in this. We thought the boy and his mother are close; the girl and her father are close. We thought that was . . . I never thought it was otherwise. I was years older when I learned that psychologists make a great deal of that sort of thing. It didn't mean a thing in my life. Just natural to go to my mother.

JH: You made the comment off tape here that you really had great respect for your mother and you didn't . . .

EHRMANN: I had love and respect and we were very close.

JH: Do you think this was true of most families at that time?

EHRMANN: Oh, I think the boys I knew went to their mothers. We never talked about it. It was just the normal thing to do.

JH: Do you think there's a great difference now and then in parental respect?

EHRMANN: There is, and the great difference is that we've got this thing called psychology and this thing called sociology; and they've put a whole lot of ideas in people's mind. I don't know how young a child is before he begins to talk about Oedipus complexes and so on -- whether he's out of the kindergarten or not.

JH: What was the role of a woman? It was traditionally

JH: a homemaker and a mother, wasn't it?

EHRMANN: The role of homemaker and mother. She went to church, and she had church activities, and then she had some kind of an outside activity. With my mother it was the Women's Home Missionary Society. Mother was on the board -- not on the board of trustees exactly but some kind of a board of the Methodist Church for the Methodist Hospital in Indianapolis and the great Methodist Hospital at Gary. They had a board that included people like my mother and she was on that. And she went to the hospital meetings, maybe once a year. She visited the schools supported by the Methodist Church in the South.

JH: So really this was her outlet then?

EHRMANN: That was her outlet. And when we moved down to Florida, she moved down there with father half the year 'cause she didn't like the summer in Miami with the mosquitoes. Remember, the mosquitoes bit the life out of you. In those days they hadn't drained the marshes and gotten rid of the mosquitoes. The Methodist Church was below Miami in Coconut Grove. That was the William Jennings Bryan Church. And right near where we lived and in the Coral Gables community was the Congregational Church, which was sort of a Protestant center. So we went to the Congregational Church. And when father died, in his obituary in the Miami Herald they spoke of him as a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church and associate (laughing) member of the Congregational Church at Coral Gables. I never knew you could be an associate member of a religion -- a religious denomination -- but my father was an associate member of the Congregational Church.

JH: (laughs) I guess he made it.

What took him to Florida?

EHRMANN: Health.

JH: Yes.

EHRMANN: And then he started going down in 1917. Father, just as when we went out to California, dabbled in real estate. Not dabbled. He bought land and had a subdivision. Here in Terre Haute he had several subdivisions. [It was a/ natural thing for him to start in. But he loaned money. He got money from

EHRMANN: people who had money to invest who entrusted my father to invest in Florida. And he built that up to a point where he got a small subdivision, and he sold those lots. And then he got another. I think in all he had five of these subdivisions. Some of his mortgage loans in Coral Gables were made with George Merrick, the developer of Coral Gables, whose mother, mother Merrick, and my mother were very close friends. Then he just worked in and then he became president of the bank of Coral Gables. Then he became on the board of trustees of the Coral Gables Military Academy. Then he was very active in the Greater Miami Civic Theater on the financial side as a banker, as treasurer for a while -- treasurer of the Greater Miami Civic Theater.

Father, wherever he was, regarded himself -- you did good. He was on the YMCA board. When the Boy Scouts were introduced, he became one of the leading . . . not a scout master, but he became, for a while, the Scout Commissioner in the community. He was active that way.

JH: So there was a strong sense of civic. . .

EHRMANN: Strong sense in active civic participation of what we'd say was the good kind.

JH: Yes.

EHRMANN: And there weren't all these psychologists and sociologists to twist you on these things. We didn't know those things.

I don't recall any friends who were rebellious except the one I mentioned, and that was I think a special case.

JH: Well, in any event we all have personality conflicts.

EHRMANN: That's why I want to excise that. I don't want the thing . . . because, goodness, I never had anything against that boy at the time.

JH: Well, that's . . .

EHRMANN: But . . .

JH: You were just a child, after all. Weren't you a normal kid?

EHRMANN: Oh, I hope so. (laughs)

Like the sign we used to see. In Ypsilanti, Michigan, was the Normal College which is now Eastern Michigan University. And the people who had rooms to rent had (oh, I'm on the air) signs in the window that said, "Rooms for Normal boys," "Rooms for Normal girls," (laughing) and even in my time [during my] earlier years at Michigan, that was a laugh. Of course, it was a laugh to the people who put 'em up. Not the first time they put 'em up, but . . .

JH: (laughs)

Dr. Ehrmann, I'm sure I've imposed on your time much too long, and we appreciate your taking time out of your busy schedule here.

EHRMANN: Just shut that off for a moment and then we

JH: Dr. Ehrmann, in signing off, so to speak, I'd like you to tell us a little bit about your experience as co-editor of the Michigan History of the Modern World.

EHRMANN: In 1957, I joined with the late Allan Nevins (n-e-v-i-n-s) (a-l-l-a-n) as co-editor of the then-being-established University of Michigan History of the Modern World, the idea for which had originated with Professor Nevins, a very distinguished American historian. [He] remained, until his death, co-editor of that series. Subsequently, I became the general editor of it. In all, to-date, 18 volumes of history have been published.

JH: Is this an ongoing work?

EHRMANN: This is an ongoing work, but the ongoing part has been slowed very considerably by my employment and work in Washington.

JH: Who is your co-editor now?

EHRMANN: I have none. I'm the general editor and [there is] no co-editor. I would like a co-editor, a much younger person. The advantage of the much younger person is his knowledge, his acquaintance with the young and oncoming, ongoing historians.

JH: Are you going to seek this person?

EHLMANN: Yes, I'm going to seek this person. Yes. As soon as some plans mature, I'd like a co-editor.

JH: Dr. Ehrmann, I can't say how much I appreciate your giving your time to tell us all about so much of Terre Haute's early history and your own personal life. And I would that we could all be as lucid and erudite as you at your stage. (laughs)

EHLMANN: One final thing. The impression of my youth was of a Terre Haute of a Main Street, a very solid, a very substantial Main Street, full of stores, no vacancies. My impression today is of a Main Street with great gaps in it. And on Ohio Street and on other streets. If the demolition of these buildings continues, the justification is only that there is some kind of, or will be some kind of, a master plan so that something will be done to bring back that impression of solid, substantial quality to Terre Haute.

JH: Thank you. I hope this comes about.

END OF TAPE.

INDEX

- Allen, Russell, 20-21
Automobiles, 8-11
"Baghdad," 5-6
Bindley, Bruce, 21
Black community, 5-6
Catholic churches, 14
Collett Park area, 7
Crawford School, 2, 26,
28-33
Dancing, school of, 17-18
Debs, Eugene V., 23
Downtown, 40
Duenweg, Oscar, 17
Ehrmann, Albert, 20
Ehrmann & Company, 1
Ehrmann, Charles Henry,
1-2, 17, 35-38
Ehrmann, Emil, 20-21
Ehrmann Manufacturing
Company, 19-20
Ehrmann, Max, 2, 18-23,
25-26
Fashions, 32-35
German community, 14
Gypsies, 13
Hayward, Anna, 33
"Idaho," 6-7
King Classical School, 26
Men's clothing stores, 34
Methodist churches, 14-18,
37
"Montana," 6-7
Prostitution, 6
Reckert, Frederick A.,
20-21
Recreation, 10-12
Red light district, 6
Religious community, 14-17
Residential areas, 7
Saloons, 5-7
State Bank of West Terre
Haute, 2
Terre Haute, reputation of, 5
Transportation, 8-11
Twelve Points, 7